

# Cavanagh hits at Aboriginal council

**CANBERRA —** The Aboriginal Affairs Minister (Senator Cavanagh) last night blamed a power-fight among urban Aboriginals for his showdown with the National Aboriginal Congress.

He accused those involved in the fight of using the body to further their own interests.

The dispute with Senator Cavanagh arose after the National Aboriginal Consultative Committee last week changed its name to the National Aboriginal Congress.

It also changed its function from that of an advisory body to one involving a much more direct say in the handling of Aboriginal affairs.

On Friday night Senator Cavanagh said that he would stop the payment of salaries to the 41 - member body.

This was because he only had authority from Cabinet to pay a body known as the National Aboriginal Consultative Committee, not one known as the National Aboriginal Congress.

The members receive \$6000 each a year plus allowances.

Last night Senator Cavanagh said from his Adelaide home that he believed the pay would stop from last Friday.

## Body's function to advise

However, he has ordered his department to check today with Treasury officials on the position.

"I would say their pay stopped last Friday as a result of their now changed position," he said.

Senator Cavanagh said the urban Aboriginals had used the N.A.C.C. in their power - fight.

It was not the body's function to tell the Minister what to do but to advise him.

"If I can persuade them to give this away we will get on all right," he said.

"They have got a false idea that popularity comes from condemning the minister, the department and the Government.

"But that's not the case judging by the information I have got this weekend."

Senator Cavanagh said he had received phone calls from several members of the congress over the weekend supporting his stand.

## 'Congress will not continue'

He had also received calls giving support from Aboriginal organisations.

He accused the body of never having fulfilled its role of an advisory committee.

"On no occasion have they given any advice to the minister at all," Senator Cavanagh said.

He added: "The congress will not continue on in its present role.

"If it is prepared to agree to become a consultative committee, then I have got authority to pay it."

The chairman of the congress (Mr Bruce McGuinness) said at the weekend that he wanted to arrange an early meeting with Senator Cavanagh to discuss the matter.

Mr McGuinness will fly to Canberra today for discussions with the Aboriginal Affairs Department.